James Madison to Henry St. George Tucker, December 23, 1817. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO HENRY ST. GEORGE TUCKER. MAD. MSS.

Montp. Decr 23, 1817.

Dr Sir I have recd. your favor of the 18th, inclosing the Report on Roads & Canals.2

2 Tucker's report was submitted to the House December 15th.— *Annals of Cong.*, 15th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. i., p. 415.

I respect too much the right and the duty of the Reps. of the people to examine for themselves, the merits of all questions before them, and am too conscious of my own fallibility, to view the most rigid & critical examination of the particular question referred to your Committee, with any other feeling than a solicitude for a result favorable to truth and the public good.

I am not unaware that my belief, not to say knowledge of the views of those who proposed the Constitution, and, what is of more importance my deep impression as to the views of those who bestowed on it the stamp of Authority, may influence my interpretation of the Instrument. On the other hand it is not impossible, that those who consult the Instrument without a danger of that bias, may be exposed to an equal one in their anxiety to find in its text an authority for a particular measure of great apparent Utility.

I must pray you, my dear Sir, to be assured that, altho' I cannot concur in the latitude of Construction taken in the Report, or in the principle that the Consent of States, even of a

single one, can enlarge the jurisdiction of the Genl. Govt. or in the force & extent allowed to precedents & analogies introduced into the Report, I do not permit this difference of opinion to diminish my esteem for the talents, or my confidence in the motives of its Author. I am far more disposed to acknowledge my thankfulness, for the polite attention shewn in forwarding the document, and for the friendly expressions which accompanied it. Be pleased to accept a sincere return of them.